

AN EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MAKING OF A DISTRICT

ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN: A CASE STUDY OF BUSHENYI DISTRICT

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Abstract

Environmental Action Planning is a legal requirement for districts under the National Environment Statute, 1995, to achieve sustainable management of the environment. With the assistance of Donors, Bushenyi District Local Government, like many other districts undertook to formulate a District Environment Action Plan using a bottom-up community participation in the planning.

This study was carried out to evaluate the extent of community participation in the making of this environment action plan. The objectives of the research were to: Assess the process of stakeholder identification and representation in DEAP consultative meetings at different levels; examine the major factors that affect community participation in the DEAP process and, assess the feasibility of proposed solutions to solve the common identified problems.

A survey study was carried on 200 people who participated in the DEAP formation exercise using a structured questionnaire, a group of five to eight people were engaged in focus group discussions.

Also used are key informant interviews with technical officers, observations and written literature as tools of data collection.

Key research findings indicate that the selection process of participants in the DEAP was leadership-based not problem or interest group based and male-dominated. Females who happen to be the key implementers are not likely to take up a key role in the implementation of the DEAP.

Mobilization of participants was not properly done because the mobilizer were no financially facilitated a slightly above average turn up of the minimum expected representation at parish level.

Probably that is why the focus group discussants rated the feasibility of proposed solutions at slightly above average. In the opinion of those interviewed, past similar plans made by government had not produced desired interests and had no confidence that government will ever get money to implement what was planned hence the exercise may not have been taken seriously. This could be the reason why they expected to be paid for participating as the only benefit. Environment action plans are looked at as a precondition for accessing badly needed government and donor funds but not as a systematic way of planning.

It is recommended that selection of participants in the DEAP process be interest group-based and not leadership based and gender balance should be deliberate. People should first be sensitized on the importance of participating in planning and making realistic targets.

The DEAP formulation was being done for the first time, the draft DEAP manual had not been tested anywhere and people had not received prior sensitization on the importance of the latter.

Bushenyi DEAP experience should be replicated in other districts of the country provided the mentioned bottleneck are avoided.